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The Manchurian Crisis - 1931

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The Manchurian Crisis

A Plea of the Chinese Students at Harvard University

While war is being universally renounced as an instrument of national policy, the recent conduct of the Japanese troops in Manchuria, ravaging the sovereign domain of China, is an obstacle to the peace and happiness of all mankind. We, the Chinese students at Harvard University, have watched the development of the situation with particular concern, and feel impelled to submit to the world a statement of facts for its candid judgment.

Manchuria, comprising the Three Eastern Provinces of China with an area of 363,700 square miles and a population of nearly 30,000,000, has been the paramount object of Japanese expansion for about thirty years. The South Manchuria Railway Company, a Japanese Government-controlled concern, led the exploitation of the country with a view to monopolizing all economic and industrial enterprises and crushing the interests of the Chinese themselves. In recent years, however, the Chinese have been developing their own industries and Japan felt aggrieved, as she saw they would obstruct her grandiose schemes. Not a few Japanese urged "strong action" against China. A convenient instrument they found in the immigration of the Koreans to "colonize" the country. During the past three months the clash of the Koreans and the Chinese at Wanpaoshan, the anti-Chinese massacres in Korea, and the Nakamura case happened in succession, putting the Sino-Japanese diplomatic relations under great strain. But as China re-

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frained from any hostile actions, Japan could find no excuse for further aggression. Suddenly her brutal force befell China with a wrath and ferocity hardly tolerable by humanity.

It was on the 18th of this month that the Japanese troops on the South Manchuria Railway, falsely alleging the destruction of a bridge by some Chinese, instantly started in many directions to disarm the Chinese garrisons in South Manchuria. The railway zone being soon outrun, the Japanese soldiers speedily occupied Mukden, the capital, and practically all other strategic points. Hundreds of Chinese were killed. Altogether there are now more than 14,000 Japanese troops in Manchuria. Additional forces had landed in Tsingtao, farther south in the province of Shantung, and gunboats appeared in the Liaotung Gulf. Since the news agency in Manchuria is under Japanese censorship, no adequate reports are available. But even from the information which has thus far reached us, it is obvious that the Japanese outrages have wrought great havoc in northeastern China. On the 22nd, the League of Nations signified its decision that the solution of the question lies in an immediate cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of troops. To this proposal the government of the United States immediately gave its "whole-hearted sympathy." Nevertheless, the answer of the Japanese Foreign Office to the League Council, dated the 24th, declared that all places had been evacuated except three. Now, it should be noted, the three places—Mukden, Changchun, and Antung—are the "gates" of South Manchuria; and with them in possession Japan's control of the entire region is intact. Moreover, air bombing by the Japanese continues to devastate the country. Thus, although the path to peaceful settlement has been pointed out, the final solution of the affair is as distant as before.

The actions of the Japanese troops are in many ways atrocious and tending to upset the peace and order of the Far East. The alleged railway-cutting incident is in itself impossible, for

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the South Manchuria Railway is garrisoned by the Japanese troops and no accident could take place unless at Japanese connivance. In view of the remarkable speed with which the military movements were conducted, it is beyond doubt that the affair was a deliberate measure to invade Chinese territory and to jeopardize the government of China. Japan was thus acting against the principle embodied in the Covenant of the League of Nations, to which she pledged allegiance. Similarly, she had set at defiance the very first section of Article 1 of the Nine-Power Treaty concluded in Washington in 1922, which reads: "The Contracting Powers, other than China, agree to respect the sovereignty, the independence, and the territorial and administrative integrity of China."

The conduct of the Japanese soldiers is the more unpardonable, as Japan is a co-signatory of the Kellogg Anti-War Pact. The Pact provides in unmistakable terms: "The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means." The actions of the Japanese military officers, however, are in such flat contradiction with the terms of the Pact that they virtually put aside the solemn renunciation of war to facilitate their imperialistic aggrandizement.

We appreciate the move taken by the League of Nations and the government of the United States in urging an immediate cessation of hostilities. Japan must either give up completely the places unlawfully occupied or become once and for all the enemy of the peace of mankind. The spirit of the League Covenant, the Washington Treaty, and the Kellogg Pact must not be suffered to die at the hands of Japanese aggression.

However, as has been pointed out, although the League and the American government have suggested a peaceful settlement, yet the means by which the final solution can be reached have not yet been devised. In fact, Japan now strongly re-

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fuses to submit to League intervention, declares to the world that her troops have been withdrawn except at three places, and urges a direct negotiation with China. We now beg leave to say that any attempt at settling the affair is entirely out of question until the Japanese have evacuated all the places. Further, direct negotiation between China and Japan will not only fasten a prejudicial settlement upon China, as had happened before; but also, since Japan has violated the peace treaties of the world, an equitable adjustment of her wrongs cannot be effected unless by arbitration. China's plea for an international commission of inquiry to examine the facts has not yet been accepted by the League Council. It is time for the League to act with effectiveness and determination. China will follow the way pointed out by the League Covenant and the Kellogg Pact, but Japan should be compelled to do the same.

For over thirty years China had been suffering from the baneful influence of Japanese force; and now when she is deeply afflicted with civil war, communism, and a devastating flood, she is once more brought to face its brutality. A more complete list of calamities perhaps cannot be found in the history of any people. In creating troubles at such critical moments, Japan's militarism discards humanity itself. The Manchurian crisis deserves the close attention of the world, if the peace and happiness of mankind are to survive.

Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
September 28, 1931.

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